

A Sacrifice for Naruto

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Hinata makes a choice to help Naruto no matter the cost.

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Author's Note: This story was written as a result of a challenge I had on my forum. The idea was given to me by, 'Deathmvp.' Any of you interested in knowing more can go to www.dotfanfiction.net/myforums/lord_of_the_land_of_fire/1308758/ Look under the topic Story Challenge: Noble Sacrifice.

Hinata approached her father's study with her shoulders slumped in defeat. She had been ordered to come here directly after returning from class. She didn't know the reason she was being summoned, but it could only be bad. Ever since her mother had died her father had paid her less and less attention. When he did deem her worthy of notice it was inevitably to remind her of some failing or weakness. She could not even remember the last time he had praised her.

As she drifted through the hall leading to her father's study various members of the Cadet branch bowed to her as they continued on their way to whatever task awaited them. Members of the Main branch hardly noticed her. She was supposedly the heir but she was treated like someone completely unnecessary. She was weak and shy and a complete disappointment. They were already talking about her sister Hanabi replacing her as heir.

So when she arrived to find her father in discussion with Hyuuga Hideki, a main branch elder, she was not surprised. Even though her father had summoned her he'd forgotten apparently. She took her place waiting outside his door. She would remain there until her father deemed to notice her.

She had not come there to listen in on his conversation or to spy on him. The fact was the door was partially open and Hideki was speaking loudly.

"I tell you it's a disgrace Hiashi-san!" Hideki said loudly. "That monster has no place being at the academy being trained! That he should be in the same class as a member of the Hyuuga mina branch is insulting!"

Who is he talking about? Hinata wondered.

"I know," her father replied calmly. "But it is the decision of the Hokage. There is nothing I can do about it."

"Uzumaki Naruto," the elder said disdainfully. "Belongs in a cage, or an urn."

Hinata frowned. This was not the first time she'd heard such hostility directed at Naruto. On the contrary, she'd noticed time and again the way people looked at him with cold and unforgiving eyes. How they constantly shunned him and made him an outcast. She couldn't understand why. Yes, he was a bit loud some times and lacked the social graces most people expected. But he was an orphan, surely it was understandable. What could he possibly have done to deserve such widespread hatred?

"He is what he is Hideki," her father replied with ease.

"It's because of what he is that I am worried. being the Kyuubi's container means there is a constant danger."

"What?" Hinata gasped.

The two adults stopped talking. A moment later the door was thrown wide open and Hinata saw both of them staring down at her.

"What are you doing here?" Hideki asked harshly.

Before she could stutter out a reply her father answered. "I asked her to come here so I could tell her how disappointed I was in her continued lack of progress." Hiashi said. "That however will have to wait. Hinata, what did you hear just now?"

She swallowed looking up into her father's stern face. "I heard Hideki-san say that Uzumaki Naruto was the Kyuubi's container. Bu... but that's impossible. Everyone know the Kyuubi was killed by the Yondaime Hokage."

The two adults passed an uncomfortable look. Without meaning to Hideki had broken one of the Hokage's laws.

"Please leave us now Hideki, I need to talk to my daughter alone."

"Yes Hiashi-san."

As always when she was brought into her father's study she was made to stand in front of his desk just like a client seeking an audience. He sat down and frowned at her grimly. She felt the intense urge to begin pressing her fingers together but resisted it knowing that would only draw his ire.

"Hinata," he spoke in his usual stiff and formal manner. "I want you to forget what you just heard."

"But why father? I do not understand."

He sighed and brought his hands together in front of his face. "Daughter I will explain, but I do so **only** that you may understand the gravity of the situation. The fact is the Yondaime Hokage did not kill the Kyuubi. The monster was too powerful to be slain even by the legendary Yellow Flash. Instead the beast was sealed into a new born child."

Hinata gasped. "Then Naruto-kun?"

That earned her a severe frown. "Naruto-kun?" Hiashi mimicked. "Are you friends of some sort with that boy?"

Hinata looked down ay her feet as she felt her face start to blush. "No father," she said in a quiet voice. "I have barely ever spoken to

him, but I admire him. Though he is alone and everyone mocks him he has faith in himself and he never gives up no matter how hard things get."

"That is admirable," Hiashi admitted. "He suffers because many in this village, like Hideki, view him simply as the Kyuubi and blame him for all the deaths the monster caused."

"He's not though, is he? Naruto couldn't possibly be the Kyuubi."

"No," Hiashi confirmed. "He is the container not the thing itself. However many refuse to understand this. I personally do not blame the boy for what was done to him. To save the village the Yondaime was forced to sacrifice himself and a newborn. In a way, I suppose, Naruto is as much a hero as the Yondaime. Though I suspect that only the Hokage himself sees it that way."

"So that is why Naruto-kun is treated so badly," Hinata said. "Father it's unjust! it's wrong that he should be made an outcast and punished for something that wasn't his fault! We have to do something!"

Hiashi raised an eyebrow at this uncharacteristic show of passion from his timid daughter. "That is no concern of ours."

"But father..."

"Enough Hinata," he told her coldly. "I only revealed this to you so that you could understand the seriousness of what you overheard. You also need to know that the Hokage passed a special law regarding the existence of the Kyuubi within Naruto. No one who knows of it is permitted to speak of the matter to anyone who does not. That specifically includes the boy himself. The penalty for breaking this law is death. Do you understand now Hinata? You are forbidden to speak of this to anyone, if you do you will be executed. Is that clear to you?"

She slowly nodded her head. "Yes father, I understand."

"Then you may go." The audience was at an end and she was being dismissed.

She trudged back to her room her mind whirling with the fact that Naruto was forced to bear such an immense burden. It was something he'd been given no say in, much like her own birth as heir to the Hyuuga clan. But where she at least was treated with respect (by those outside the Mina branch at least) Naruto was treated like a pariah by everyone. Even his fellow classmates shied away from him, no doubt affected by their parents beliefs.

That was not fair. If he was going to be made responsible for such a burden the *least* he was owed was fair treatment. That thought stayed in her mind and refused to go away.

Over the next several weeks she watched Naruto from a distance as she normally did. Now though she did it with greater understanding of the situation. When the instructors refused to give him any attention or answer his questions she saw blatant prejudice. When the other children refused to interact with him except to mock him she saw ignorance. When he ate or sat alone on the swing she could see his pain.

She wanted desperately to be his friend and try and ease his suffering, but she always held back. She was always afraid that her father would find out and order her to not speak to or interact with him. So day after day she sat back as a silent observer watching this terrible injustice play out in front of her.

She assumed the Hokage's law had been meant to protect Naruto and give him some sort of chance to be treated normally. However in fact it simply allowed him to be made an outcast without his classmates even knowing why.

The more of his treatment she saw the more convinced Hinata became of that.

Then one day after yet another failed attempt to ask Sakura out during recess she glared at him and yelled at the top of her lungs.

"Will you give it up already you dumb baka! No one likes you! No one!"

"That's not true!" Naruto shot back.

"Fine," Sakura said with a nasty and triumphant air. She looked all around at the other kids. "Does anybody here like him?"

This brought a round of laughter from most of the other children.

Sasuke ignored it as he ignored most everything. Shikamaru frowned but figured it would just be too troublesome to get involved with.

Naruto stared at all the others who were laughing at him and began to cry.

"STOP IT!"

The laughter died as all eyes turned to the usually invisible Hinata. Everyone was shocked to see her not only getting in the middle of this but looking rather fearsome.

"I like him!" She declared loudly stunning all of them. No one more than Naruto himself.

Sakura stood there with her jaw hanging open. "What are you talking about? He's a troublemaker, everyone knows that. My mom said..."

"Shut up," Hinata snapped in a rare display of anger. "Your mother is racist and you're ignorant."

Sakura choked not believing what she was hearing.

Hinata saw Naruto staring at her with wide eyes. She saw everyone looking at her. She knew this was her one and only chance to try and *really* help him. If she didn't do it right now her courage would fail her and she never would. She understood what the price would be, but didn't care. If she could make a real difference in his life, if she could help him, then it was worth it.

"Do you want to know the real reason your parents are all so cruel to him?" She demanded. "It's because within him is the Kyuubi. The Yondaime Hokage didn't kill the Kyuubi, he sealed him inside Naruto. *That* is why everyone treats him the way they do! It's for something that wasn't his choice! For something that was done to him as a baby! He protects the village from the nine tail demon fox, he should be treated like a hero!"

The kids were silent and staring, not knowing what to say or do.

"That's not true," Naruto whispered. "Hinata you're a liar! There's no way that could be true!"

She turned top him and bowed very deeply which brought a shocked murmur. The kids had all been brought up to understand social status. No matter how quiet and unassuming Hinata was she was heir to one of Konoha's most powerful clans. Naruto was an orphan with no standing. For Hinata to openly bow to him was as shocking as her revelation.

"Naruto-kun I'm sorry I had to do it like this. Please forgive me. I should have told you the truth first, but if I did not speak it now I never would have. My courage would have failed me. You see there is a special law that no one is allowed to reveal this secret. Because of what I have just said I will be executed."

"Executed?" Naruto said faintly.

She stood there and nodded. Now that it was done she was oddly at peace. A couple of the academy instructors were hurrying over towards her looking grim.

"Then why did you say this?" He demanded.

"Because I like you," she told him. "You're brave and strong and you never give up no matter how hard things get! I have always admired and liked you Naruto!" No matter the circumstances, she was glad she'd at least gotten the chance to admit that to him. She looked at the others. "Now that you know the truth please treat him fairly from now on! Don't be mean to him just because that's what your parents want! Please see him like I do, as a hero."

A pair of Chunin instructors placed their hands on her shoulders. "That's enough Hinata," one of them said brusquely. "Come with us. The rest of you go home! Class is cancelled for the rest of the day!"

"Hey!" Naruto shouted. "Where are you taking Hinata-chan?"

Hinata knew it was silly, but hearing him acknowledge her and call her 'chan' made it all seem worthwhile.

"Goodbye Naruto-kun, please live a long and happy life."

She left with the instructors without resistance as Naruto shouted out after her.

"Old man I need to talk to you!" Naruto burst into the Hokage's office to find Hyuuga Hiashi already there with a solemn Sarutobi seated behind his desk.

"Come in Naruto," he said wearily. "I know what this is about."

"Is it true?" He demanded without hesitation. "Am I really the Kyuubi? Is Hinata really going to be executed?"

"You are not the Kyuubi Naruto, but it is true that he is sealed within you."

Naruto stared at the Hokage looking completely and utterly betrayed. "How... how could you not have told me?"

"What I have done Naruto was not only for your own good but the good of the village. I fully intended to tell you once you graduated and were a ninja. I tried to keep the secret to protect you and give you at least the chance for some sort of normal life."

"What about Hinata?" He challenged. "There's no way you're going to kill her right?"

"Naruto, this man is Hyuuga Hiashi, Hinata's father. He has also come here to ask for clemency on her behalf."

"Lord Hokage," Hiashi spoke in a pleading tone that was alien to him. The last time he had used it had been when he'd been arguing against his brother Hizashi's sacrifice. "I fully realize the extent of my daughter's offense. I ask that you allow me to take her place. She is foolish and weak, but she is my child."

Hiashi surprised the Hokage and young Naruto by falling to his knees and prostrating himself. "I beg you Lord Hokage, allow me to be punished instead and spare Hinata."

Sarutobi looked sadly at the man. "Please get up Hiashi. I am truly sorry, but there is nothing I can do in this matter."

"What are you talking about old man?" Naruto burst out. "There's no way you can kill Hinata just for telling the truth!"

"She is to be killed because she knowingly violated a law Naruto," the Hokage told him firmly. "Had she been discreet I might have been able to look the other way and pretend ignorance. However she deliberately informed your entire class in a public manner. It is impossible for me to simply ignore this."

"But she's just a little girl!" He wailed. "She's a good person!"

"Naruto the laws have to apply to everyone or they're not laws." The Hokage said. He was sympathetic and clearly unhappy with the situation, but he continued remorselessly. "Would it be justice if I were to have another man executed for breaking this law but spare her when she acted knowingly?" He shook his head. "For it to be justice it must apply to all. I am sorry."

And no matter how fervently Naruto pleaded the Hokage would not be swayed.

Hinata went to her execution with the calm and dignity one would expect from the Hyuuga heiress. In death at least she was every bit the Hyuuga she had never managed to be in life.

The next day a broken hearted Naruto went to class.

He couldn't understand why she had done it. No one but the old man was ever kind to him. Why would someone go so far for his sake? He wished with all his heart that she had never told him and the others and had instead just been a friend to him.

As he entered the classroom all eyes turned to him. he swallowed and braced himself knowing they would all blame him for what had happened and hate him even more.

"Hey dead last," Uchiha Sasuke spoke. "You know your taijutsu is horrible. Why don't we partner up during sparring and I'll help you with that."

Naruto stared at him dumbfounded. Sasuke **never** tried to help anyone. He had never once spoken to him except to insult or belittle him.

"Hey Naruto," Shikamaru spoke. "Want to go watching clouds with me and Chouji later?"

"Naruto how about you go picking flowers with me some time?" Ino asked with a kind smile.

"Yo, want to come visit my home?" Kiba invited. "You can come play with the puppies."

"if you like we can go into the forest to collect insects," Shino said with a lifeless monotone. (This actually just creeped Naruto out.)

Sakura came up to him and bowed. "I'm sorry for being so mean to you all this time Naruto-kun. I still won't go on a date with you since I'm in love with Sasuke-kun, but if you want we can be friends."

Naruto stood there unable to respond. He had expected them all to hate him.

Sasuke seemed to understand and answered on behalf of all of them.

"Hinata asked us to treat you as a hero, and we're going to do that. she was right, you didn't deserve to be singled out for something that was never your fault. We're going to make up for how the rest of the village treats you."

All the students nodded their heads in unified agreement.

From that day on Naruto was never alone again.

Ten Years Later

The Sixth Hokage entered the Hyuuga compound and went to the family grave site as he did every week. In his hands were a bouquet of white lilies that his wife Ino had picked out for him. His best friend Sasuke accompanied him as he often did.

As he laid the flowers down at the grave he hoped Hinata was somehow watching and was happy for him. He had tried his very

best to live not only a long and happy life but an exemplary one. He felt he owed it to the person who had given him so very much.

He slapped his hands together and bowed his head in silent prayer.

I will never forget you Hinata-chan.